

Sergeant Robert A. "Rob" Williams

Badge #235

10-42 ... February 16, 2001

Sergeant Robert A. Williams was not "just another member" of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. He was my supervisor for more than four years and I considered him my friend. Admittedly, we did not do the things that friends are "supposed" to do, like hunt and fish together, but we had a meeting of our spirits like friends do.

I'll tell you what kind of supervisor he was. On several occasions over the four years he and I would be in the zone office together, a telephone call would come in and he would answer the phone. I knew by the conversation that our communications center was giving him information for a service call. He would hang up the phone and, without a word, get up and start for the door.

I would ask him, "What's going on, Rob?" (He didn't require us to call him sergeant.) He would state briefly his intent while still walking toward the door. I would stand up (to add emphasis) and insist that he allow me to take that service call. Sometimes, this worked, but there were times when his insistence overrode mine.

I know a little bit about what kind of man he was toward his family. He hosted an annual birthday party at the local swimming pool for his daughter and

would invite the zone members and families. My family and I were able to attend the last two years. He kept pictures of his family posted around his workstation along with drawings done by his two children. I can say with all certainty that he ate more dinners with his family at home than he did with me in the field over the last four years. Rob loved his family.

One of my fondest memories was when I got up out of bed one morning and my son asked me where was my patrol car? I walked outside and found it gone. If this has ever happened to you,



Paula and Rob Williams.



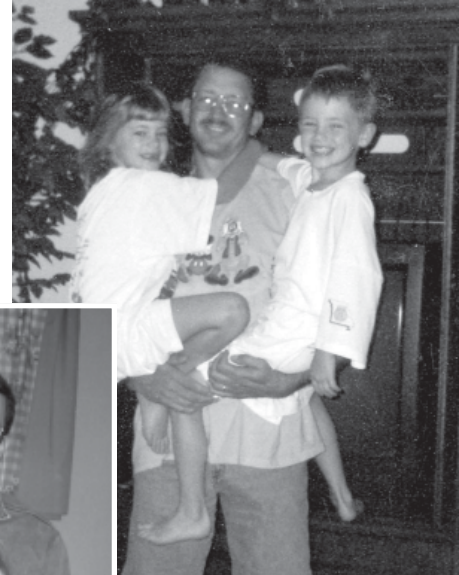
Expectant Mom Paula (carrying Justin), Ashton, and Rob are all smiles at the Scott County Courthouse, April 14, 1992—Adoption Day!

then you know what kind of things were going through my head. I telephoned my communications center (Poplar Bluff) to advise them that my car was missing. Of course, the person on the other end stated in a joyous manner that my car was not missing, but instead was borrowed by Rob. The night before he was involved in a minor accident while in his unit and had borrowed mine. I'm sure that in his always considerate way he had advised people not to wake me from my sleep, knowing that I could be advised at a more reasonable hour.

You know, I wish that in the early morning hours of February 16, 2001, it had been just a simple case of him having a minor accident, and I had gotten up and found my patrol car missing. Instead, I awakened to find my friend and former supervisor missing.



A Williams family Christmas—Justin, Paula, Rob, and Ashton.



Rob with Ashton and Justin at home in Portageville, MO.

Still, I'll be OK, because Rob was "not just another member". I know where he is because we had a meeting of our spirits.

(Trooper Freddie L. Butler Jr.'s article originally appeared in the April 2001 Patrol News. He is now Corporal Butler, and is assigned to the Gaming Division.

Sergeant Robert A. Williams is survived by his wife, Paula, and two children, Ashton and Justin. Sgt. Williams (235), 41, was killed in a traffic crash on February 16, 2001. He was responding to a previous traffic crash when he lost control of his patrol car on Southbound Interstate 55 in Pemiscot County. Sgt. Williams' patrol car slid off the rain-soaked roadway and struck a bridge abutment in the median of I-55.)